1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

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PART I : Land, History and People

1. General Orientation:

A. Definition of Terms:

The Amhara culture dealt with in this study is to a considerable extent identified with the culture formerly [171] referred to as "Abyssinian". Actually, the Abyssinian culture, heir to the cultural blending of ancient Semitic and African traits, has developed into several sub-cultures of which the Amhara culture is the major one. Another important sub-culture would be that of the Tigre-speaking population of Eritrea.

The term "Abyssinia", which was the official name of the country until the 20th century, is possibly derived from the name the centrally-located river Awash, which flows in the Rift Valley bisecting the country, losing itself in the eastern lowland desert on its way to the Red Sea coast. Another explanation derives it from the Habashat, one of the Semitic tribes from Hadhramaut, which crossed over the Bab El Mandeb about 500 B.C. A third explanation derives the name from the Arabic term signifying racial mixture.

The present Emperor preferred the official name Ethiopia, the political frontiers of which include the territory of non-Abyssinian peoples like the Galla, conquered by Abyssinia in the late 19th century. "Ethiopia", derived from the Greek term signifying "people with sunburned faces", was used in classical antiquity to describe all Africa south of the Sahara.

111 The religion of the Amhara and most other "Abyssinian" peoples is an early, Monophysite form of Christianity, often

referred to as "Coptic", although the Abyssinian Copts prefer the term "Towado" meaning Orthodox. The term Copt is derived from the Greek term for "Egyptian." Since the Coptic Metropolitan of Alexandria, Egypt, was also head of the Abyssinian Church and appointed all Abyssinian archbishops until recent years of the reign of the present Emperor, there is some justification for the use of the term Coptic. It will/be so used in this study, to indicate the "Abyssinian Church of Ethiopia".

In books on Ethiopia, one often finds the term "Amhara" used in a broad sense as synonymous with Abyssinian Coptic. Christian. Although the Amhara in their ethnocentrism also use it in this sense, it is not good usage in the author's opinion. The Tigrinya-speaking peoples of the province of Tigre are also good "Copts", in religious belief and observance; however, they differ from the Amhara in many phases of culture, and, according to native opinion, in personality". Therefore, the term Amhara is used in this study only for the Amharic-speaking, Coptic population of the provinces of Begemdir(Gondar), Gojjam, and parts of Shoa. Formerly, all three provinces were included in a territorial unit called Amhara; hence the name.

B. Linguistic Definitions

There are three major linguistic families in Ethiopia: Cushitic, Semitic and Nilotic. Cushitic is predominant, roughly speaking, in the southern half of modern Ethiopia, including Galla, Somali, Sidamo, Agau, etc. Nilotic languages predominate along the northern and western escarp-

A in the minds of most Amhara:

E 1. The Coptic Abyssinian, on which top level the Am-
563 haric-speaker and the Tigrina-speaker are equal except for the added Amhara prestige due to the "Solomonic Dynasty". Both consider themselves "attentam" (of noble bones). Both consider themselves superior to all other groups, notably the "conquered nations", infidels,"laboring classes" and "lower races". Both consider themselves the descendants of the Hadhrami invaders of the late pre-Christian era.

As conquerors, the Amhara believe in their superior toughness. The aphorism says:

A
[539] "The aged Amhara is (powerful) like bärbärē
the aged Galla is (soft) like butter".

A
[101] The word Amhara is itself derived from "amari", meaning one who is pleasing, agreeable, beautiful and gracious.

On the other hand, the services rendered by Galla cavalry to Menelik II (e.g. in his victory over the Italians at Aduwa) are well known and admitted. In reward, many of the Galla feudal nobles were permitted to retain in fief 1/4 of their land and its serfs, so that a Galla "Balbat" (landowner) class has arisen and prospered. They are in ostentatious presence at all national festivals in Addis Ababa, notably the annual coronation festival of Haile Selassie, when their young men are seen and heard, jumping with brandished spears or sticks, shouting the loyalty of the "Oromo" to "Addis Ababa" (symbolic for Menelik and Haile Selassie). Among the modern-educated Amhara, and even among many uneducated Amhara of Shoa province, intermarriage with Galla Balbat families is not rare, nowadays, especially if the Galla partner is wealthier than the Amhara, and if the Galla is the bride. This is still resis-

2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

perial Army, recruited largely from the non-Amharic southern region of Galla-Sidamo, advanced from Dessie and met the feudal levies of the pretender on the plateau of Debra Zebit. A great head-on encounter of over thirty thousand riflemen and spearmen took place along a front extending over 10 km. A lucky reconnaissance by the Emperor's two French Potez planes was probably the decisive episode in the battle. Somewhere in the mêlée Ras Gugsa Wolye was dragged from his mule and hacked to pieces. This last epic contest of feudal lords recalls one of the battles of the Wars of the Roses.

Dessie itself has something of the character of an alpine *Kurort*, and the Italians intended to develop it as such. When I was there the fairly numerous Italian colony was being removed to Asmara, and it was obvious that the town was gradually reverting to the untidy agglomeration of huts and shanties which is all the easy-going Ethiopian countryman requires in a town.

The surrounding grassy *alms* are the finest stock-raising country in Africa. Between the surrounding peaks of the uplands I have ridden for 3 or 4 miles over turf as flat as a race-course. I had the pleasant task of running a reception camp for surrendered Italian mules and ponies, and I was free to spend a good deal of time in the saddle under fresh wind-swept skies which recalled an English June.

The road from Dessie to Debra Tabor descends and ascends the canyon of the Bashilo and crosses the plateau of Debra Zebit. Magdala, the fortress capital of the Emperor Theodore, lies to the south-west, and the route from the Bashilo to Debra Zebit is the reverse of that taken by Napier in 1868, when he made his remarkable march up from the Red Sea. After Debra Zebit the route crosses the panhandle which forms the watershed between the Bashilo flowing to the Blue Nile and the northward-flowing Takkaze. Farther on towards Debra Tabor, with the incline down to the Lake Tana basin, the vegetation becomes richer. Snipe abound and are so tame that they could almost be killed with a stick.

In the mountains to the south-east of Debra Tabor is the curious anarchic community known as the Republic of Gaint, whose people claim to recognize no authority. The late Captain Pilkington and Captain McLean, who were organizing the tribes south and east of Lake Tana, managed to establish very friendly contact with the Gaint people.

Many hard things have been said about the Abyssinians. Some people have found it difficult to get on with them; but it is notable that foreigners who have spent some time with them are generally happy in their company. Under the name of Abyssinian, or of Ethiopian which they themselves prefer, are included people as varied as the Amhara and the Galla; the Hararene and the Tigraian; the Shoan and the Agau. It is worth giving an individual impression of these different groups.

The Amhara racial type includes both the Amhara and the Shoan, and, to a great extent also, the Gojjami. The Amhara are the dominant racial stock of the central Ethiopian Highland rather than the ruling caste of Ethiopia. There are plenty of poor Amhara villagers. The Amhara are described as of Hamitic origin; but from the earliest times there has been a strong infusion

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

principal revenue of the clergy is the presents made by those who are sick, or dying. The 794

The dress of the Acab saat is a purple burnoose, with a white turban, not unlike the Turkish Imams, or a white handkerchief hanging loose behind. The Kees hatze is the king's official confessor, official Alaka of the church of Tecla-haimanout, and curator of the two churches of Gondar. 292

The Abuna's words of absolution, in a case of excommunication, is, "Gzier ephtac," God absolve thee. [783]

Women, after having born a son, are excluded from the church 40 days, and if a daughter, 80. The really married are those who receive the sacrament on that occasion. Persons who have been connected with any woman, are excluded from church during three days; if that connection has been promiscuous, they are excluded seven; and then even admitted to receive the sacrament. If a man, really married, is guilty with another's wife, he is not debarred a longer period. Women in the menses are not allowed to enter the church till seven days afterwards. Circumcision is performed on the eight, and baptism is celebrated on the forty-first day of the child's age. On all the fore-mentioned occasions they only come within the inner precinct, and kiss the walls and door-posts of the church. The clergy are rigid in these matters, and that is, perhaps, one of the reasons why the churches are ill-attended. It is their only duty; the monks making no scruple of confessing that they cannot enter the church, for that day they had to do with a woman, which is not attended with any impeachment. 796 784 [846] [841] [304] [852]

Geography and revenue of Abyssinia.—The Iteghe from Bure in two days arrived at Metchakel, in her way to Gojam: It may be about as far as from this (Gondar) to Caroota; I suppose from 30 to 32 miles at farthest. From Metchakel to Nazarit six days easy journey; from 10 to 12 miles, I suppose, *per diem*. Gojam here belongs to Ayto Aylo, son of Ozoro Welleta Israel. The Galla are Toluma. The Galla who border on Amhara are much the worst of all the Galla, and the least worst are the Edjow east of them, bordering upon Begemder and Angot, called Guangoul Galla. Those near Amhara are Wutchali, Woolo, Amito, and Toluma; 131 361 101

[p. 57]

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

101 and these Toluma come down to the Nile, and divide Walaka and Shoa from the Nile.

651 Agow-midre pays yearly to the king in all about 1000 ounces of gold; and 1000 dabras of honey, each dabra about 60 rotol. It pays also about 1000 or 1500 cattle. Ancasha, Azena, Quaquera, and Banja, pay their quota in honey; Banja, gold; Metchakel, Ayamico's country, gold; Zigam, gold, no honey. Danguiah, Dengla, and Saccala, all are called Ancasha. Dengla pays chiefly cattle, and a large kind of sheep called Macoot. Butter is no part of the meery, but is brought as a present on paying the meery. After passing the Kelti, on the right, by the Bronti, is Atchefer, after that Quaquera, then Dengla, then Banja, then Metchakel. Temhua belongs to the Ras, and the revenue is paid to him. The first heavy stroke the Agow received of late years was Waragna, father of this Fasil, bringing Galla from beyond the Abay, and wasting their country entirely. He burnt the houses and churches, and led away captive the women and children. Under the mild government of Casmati Eshte they began to revive, but now again under Fasil they are very low.

361 Metchakel is one long day's journey, I suppose 36 miles, from Boori (Bure); it is inhabited by Galla Djawi. After these are the Basso Gallo; and the Gooderoo Galla of Kasmati Boro. His place is called Hadis Amba. These border on Gojam, Damot, and Metchakel. Gafat is not one continued country, but villages here and there. Wumbarma is Gafat. Metchakel is, however, a much more considerable country. Beyond the Nile, west of Bure, the country for a considerable distance is dry, deserted, and uninhabited, the Galla living further into the territory. All the banks are there high, steep, and unwholesome, and full of trees. These Galla are Amoro Jidda. Guesgue belongs to the Iteghe, has a nagareet, and gives the title of Kasmati. It pays 1000 cloths, 50 oxen, and 100 wakeet.

The caravans of Egypt used to go from Aidab, or Gaidab, to Dahalac, in their way to Yemen, or Jidda, the port of Mecca. Souakin is seven days south of Gaidab.

101 563 The Galla, west of the Abay, say, that they are descended of a Gin or devil, and a woman of the tribe of Koreish. They are always at war with the Nareans, Abyssinians, or

[p. 58]

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

Mahometans. They reckon about 12,000 horse of Galla between the Nile and Narea. The tribes go every seventh year to the reigning house, where the council debates on the duties of government. The points agitated are, how our fathers governed, what measures are to be taken with murderers and robbers on the high-ways, how merchants are to be dealt with, &c. The young then declaim in favour of violence and injustice; after which the elders, five in number, are asked. These decide in favour of equity. The king is afterwards chosen by a plurality of voices. 101 563

Waragna, father of Fasil, was converted to Christianity. His father was Wusho (signifying a dog), of the western Galla, of the tribe Jimmali. He was a merchant; but being remarked to be brave in a battle Bacuffa had with these Galla, he was invested with the caftan, and made commander of several places on the frontiers of Damot.

The Djawi Galla of Damot, Gafat, and Metchakel, as also the Galla of Maitsha, came there, in the time of Yasous Tallac. The Basso, and other Galla of Gojam, were brought there by Hatze Fasil; others say his son Hannes.

Maitsha, from the place the Abay comes out of the lake to Courtohha, is $1\frac{1}{2}$ day's march, at a moderate pace, 6 hours a day; from Courtohha, the hither part, to Samseen, one long day's journey; and from the same part to the Abay at Goutta, a very long day's journey, at a brisk pace. 361

The Shankala entrench their huts against surprise, and burn large fires. They wear a long shield, covering nearly the whole side, and five lances each, which they throw or stab with as needed. Bows and arrows are their chief weapons. They dig up gold among reddish earth, which they burn in the fire, and gather it as it runs out in small pieces like shot. They put it next in to a small purse, or other sort of bag. Every individual is free to search for it. They are flat-nosed and flat-lipped, very black, best shaped in the upper parts, but with bad knees and legs. 563

The Bure way to Narea is W. in the country south by Amoro. The nearest way is by Gojam and Gooderoo, performed in 30 days with loaden asses, about eight or nine miles a-day. 487

Harar is a very large town, has five gates, and is constantly at war with Habbesh, or the Galla. The ridge of hills 361

[p. 59]

9: Coon D-5 (1935 1937) 1939 MP5 Amhara MP5
Somali MO4

(2) *The Sidamos:* The corresponding pre-Semitic agricultural population of the present Galla country, living in the midst of Galla tribal territories, and in small separate kingdoms of their own, in southwestern Ethiopia. The best known Sidamo state is that of Kaffa, whose name has been given to coffee. Throughout the Galla country, the numerous peasant class consists largely of linguistically altered Sidamos. 000

(3) *The Amharas:* This is a general name applied to the Ethiopians proper, members of the four kingdoms of Tigré, Amhara, Gojjam, and Shoa. The Guraghes, who live south of Addis Ababa, speak Amharic, as do all the others named except the Tigrés, whose language is a parallel derivative of Geez. These people are the descendants of the Hadhrami invaders of the late pre-Christian era, and were, until the Italian conquest of 1935–37, the dominant people of Ethiopia. A 101

(4) *The Gallas:* The inhabitants of most of southwestern Ethiopia, including the country as far north and east as Addis Ababa, are Gallas; descendants of a warlike confederation of nomadic tribes who invaded Ethiopia from the southwest in the sixteenth century. The original Gallas, who came in great numbers, were cattle people with the traditional East African dislike for agriculture or menial occupations, and settled down in their present territory as aristocrats. Galla society today is divided into four classes: the Oromo, or Galla proper, the aristocrats; the Tumtu or blacksmiths, the subservient class of artisans who are also farmers; the Faki, a low caste of tanners; and the Watta, outcaste hunters who live in separate villages. The Oromo have, for the most part, submitted to the pursuit of agriculture, while continuing at the same time their cattle raising. 000

(5) *The Somalis:* The whole Horn of Africa, including the three Somalilands and the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, is occupied by various tribes of Somalis, nomadic Hamites who profess Islam and claim descent from Arabian missionaries. Their origin is not clearly known, but it is evident that there must have been some Galla as well as Arabian mixture, grafted onto a local Hamitic population. S 101

(6) *The Danakil* (also called Afar): In southwestern Eritrea and adjacent parts of the desert of northeastern Ethiopia, as well as in part of French Somaliland, live the Danakil, tribesmen culturally related to the Somalis, who also claim Arabian ancestry. North of the Danakil in Eritrea live other tribes of the same general type. The Somalis, Danakil, and their northern relatives form part of a continuous belt of nomadic Hamites reaching from the Horn of Africa to Egypt; the northern representatives, however, from the Eritrean Beja to the Egyptian Bisharin, have been subjected to strong admixture with Sudanese negroes. 000

(7) *Negroes in Hamitic Territory:* In Eritrea the tribes of Baria and Cunama, in the midst of Hamitic-Tigré territory, probably represent, in

.11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5
Ethiopia MP1

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[P.11]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5
Ethiopia MP1
Tigre MN9

I

INTRODUCTION

AMHARA TRADITION AND ETHIOPIA'S MODERNIZATION

THE FACT OF AMHARA DOMINANCE

Of the many traditions which are alive in the empire of Ethiopia—those of the nomadic Danakil and the sedentary Wollamo, the hippopotamus-eating Woyto and the ensete-eating Gurage, the age-graded Konso and the patrilineal Somali, the Judaic Falasha and the Muslim Bani 'Amer, and many others—clearly the dominant tradition is that of the people known throughout history to the outside world as the Abyssinians. Living on the temperate highland massif in the northern and central regions of the country, these people[1] have gained their subsistence through the plow cultivation of cereal grains, have organized their polity as a feudal kingdom, and have remained steadfast in their Monophysite Christian faith since its introduction to the land in the fourth century.

The Abyssinians comprise two linguistic and geographical groups—the Amhara and the Tigre.* The Tigre inhabit the northern part of Ethiopia, above the Takazzē River; their lands fall in what are now the province of Tigre and the former Italian colony of Eritrea. Their language, Tigrinya, is

* Abyssinians object to the term "Abyssinian," since it has been used pejoratively by foreigners, even though they do use its indigenous counterpart, *"Hābashā,"* among themselves. The term apparently derives from the name of one of the South Arabian tribes which migrated to Ethiopia in antiquity—the Habashat. In deference to this objection, I shall use the compound "Amhara-Tigre" in place of "Abyssinian" wherever feasible. The name "Ethiopia" will be used consistently to refer to the national polity which, throughout its history, has included other peoples and traditions as well as the Amhara-Tigre.

1. [The Abyssinians, composed of Amhara and Tigre--Analyst]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5
Ethiopia MP1

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[P.ii]

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

PREFACE

121 This dissertation describes the medical beliefs and practices of an Amhara population of northwestern Ethio-
114 pia. The field research upon which it is based was con-
131 ducted from January to December, 1966, in the highland area of Begemder province that extends from Gorgora, on the northern shore of Lake Tana, to Debark, overlooking
• 101 the Takassie valley (see Map 3). This region is occupied
144 by four ethnic groups, the Amhara, Abyssinian Muslims,
197 Falasha (Abyssinian Jews), and Agaw (former pagans). All
131 are racially indistinguishable from one another, and speak a common language, Amharic. North of the Takassie River live the Tigre, a people closely related to the Amhara and, like the latter, Coptic Christians.

101 The Amhara, who are the most numerous of Begemder's peoples, also inhabit much of the highland plateau extending to the south, into Gojam and Shoa provinces, and to
231 the east, into Wollo province. Most Amhara are rural folk
241 who practice a mixed agricultural economy, gorwing grains
621 and pulses; raising sheep, goats, and cattle. The Amhara
632 countryside is divided into parishes. A parish is composed of several hamlets whose residents live on dispersed homesteads, and share important social and econo-
369 mic ties through their parish's church. In addition to these rural folk, Amhara constitute a majority among the townspeople of highland Begemder.

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

MAP 2

THE MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS OF BEGEMDER PROVINCE

(Adapted from Simoons 1960: 22)

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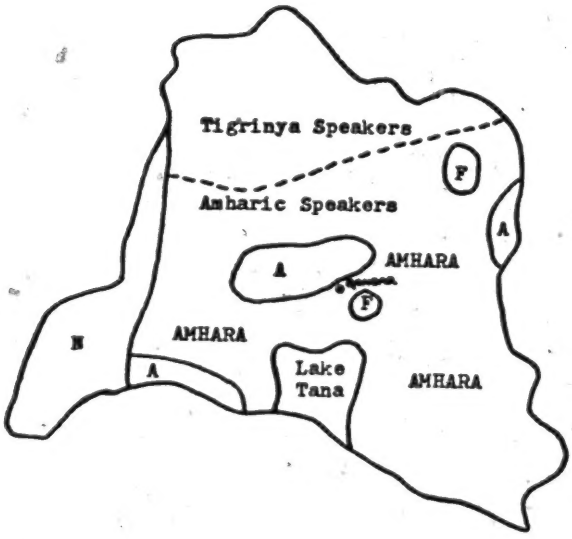

A: Agaw

F: Falasha

N: Nilotes

AMHARA: Abyssinian Muslims also dispersed throughout these areas

753 grazing. Both highland zones are considered ideal for
131 human habitation. While residents of the dega zone oc-
133 casionally comment on what they regard as the uncomfor-
821 table summer heat of the weyna dega, at the same time it is acknowledged that the rainy season (kiramt) is more burdensome in the dega. The rains last from May to September and are marked by temperatures in the mid-thirties in dega lands and perhaps ten to fifteen degrees warmer in the weyna dega. This season is regarded as a particularly bad time for kurtimat (rheumatoid complaints) whose severity is considered greatest in the dega zone. Epidemiologically, the dega is also associated with a relatively high incidence of yinifas basiyta ("the wind disease"), an ailment described in Chapter One.

131 Although reliable population estimates are lacking,
101 the weyna dega and dega zones contain perhaps 85% of
161 Begemder's people. These rural highlands are occupied
197 by five ethnic groups, racially indistinguishable from
144 one another and, with an exception, now speaking a common Semetic language, Amharic. The Amhara are the most numerous of Begemder's highland peoples, and extend into the provinces of Gojam and Shoa, to the south. Within the Begemder highlands, they occupy the area south of latitude $13^{0}30'$. North of this line live the Tigre, a related people who speak a cognate language, Tigrinya.
101 Both Amhara and Tigre are Coptic Christians, and from
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12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

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779 their combined ranks the political elite of Ethiopia has been historically recruited. Third among the highland peoples are the Agaw. It appears likely that they are the descendants of the original Hamitic population of this region, and only during the last century have most Begemder Agaw been converted from their indigenous religious beliefs to membership in the Coptic Church. Within Begemder, they constitute a majority of the inhabitants of three non-contiguous areas. Fourth among highlanders are the rural Muslims, indigenous people who have been converted to Islam over the last five centuries.

241 While the rural Amhara, Tigre, and Agaw are exclusively
463 farmers, these Muslims divide their energies between farm-
286 ing and working as artisans, mainly weavers of the toga
443 cloth; Muslim women are prominant among the traders of
562 the weekly markets held throughout the province. Least numerous of the highland people are the Falasha, Abyssin-
423 ian Jews following a Mosaic creed. A despised and humil-
326 iated people, the Falasha farm only rented fields
286 (timene), and work as smiths as well as weavers; Falasha
162 women are potters. Although the Falasha are localized in several regions, they nowhere constitute a majority
361 of an area's residents. Like the Abyssinian Muslims, they reside either in hamlets of their own, apart from Amhara, or in peripheral homesteads of otherwise Christian hamlets. These distributions are summarized in Map2.